

WASHINGTON, D.C. - Today Congressman John W. Olver announced that the Senate passed the "Freedom's Way National Heritage Area Act." This legislation would recognize 45 historically rich communities in Massachusetts and New Hampshire that have made important contributions to the national character of America.

Designation as a National Heritage Area provides technical assistance from the National Parks Service, as well as access to federal dollars. Congressman John Olver said, "Federal recognition of Freedom's Way Heritage Area is an initiative that has been in the works for quite some time now. The Senate vote brings us one very important step closer. This legislation will not only assist with efforts to preserve our historical landmarks, it will also help boost tourism and spur sustainable economic development."

The Freedom's Way Heritage Act highlights the history of the New England Landscape, with a special emphasis on freedom and democratic action. This region was host to a series of key historic events that influenced the course of the early settlement of our country, most notably the American Revolution.

Some of the sites included in the legislation are the Gardner Heritage Park, the Fitchburg Art Museum and the Johnny Appleseed Visitor's Center in Leominster. In addition, Freedom's Way chronicles and celebrates the stories of Lexington, Concord and the area town militia and minutemen; religious freedom and the activities of the Shakers and the Transcendentalists; and social justice, the abolition of slavery, gender equality and conservation.

The Freedom's Way Heritage Area would include 36 Massachusetts communities located northwest of Boston and stretching to central Massachusetts, as well as 6 communities in southern New Hampshire.

Olver filed the House companion bill on March 1, 2008. Joining Olver as co-sponsors of the legislation are U.S. Representatives Marty Meehan (D-MA), Jim McGovern (D-MA), Ed Markey (D-MA), John Tierney (D-MA) and Paul Hodes (D-NH). A House vote on the legislation is expected shortly.

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